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ABSTRACT

The continuing transition of rural development from its old to present day form is discussed, treating varied perceptions of its goals and the continuing resolution of approaches through legislation and appropriations. Some of the goals are community development, human resources development, natural resources preservation, and a more equitable distribution of benefits. The rural development dynamics to accomplish these goals include appropriations, the projects developed by State Agricultural Experiment Stations, and community improvement research. The Rural Development Act of 1972, the first concrete legislative commitment for a joint research-extension effort toward solving rural development problems, includes programs for education, research, credit and other financial assistance, and planning. The paper also cites some rural development crises--lack of organization of development efforts, the underdevelopment process and lack of alternatives (especially in relation to the land grant universities), food and energy shortages, and the depletion of natural resources. Overall, though, the assumption is made that despite a slow start and lack of strong viable support, rural development will continue as a program of interest and action for some time to come. (Author/KM)

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RURAL DEVELOPMENT: GOALS, DYNAMICS, CRISES AND RECOMMENDATIONS[1]

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ABSTRACT The continuing transition of rural development from its old to present day form is discussed. The varied perceptions of its goals and the continuing resolution of approaches through legislation and appropriations are treated. The growth in inputs into research and topics being researched are described. Some of the crisis type problems encountered in the overall development of the program and suggested recommendations for strengthening it are related. Despite a slow start and lack of strong viable support an assumption is made that rural development will continue as a program of interest and action for a long time to come.

When the United States took its first census in 1790, only one out of every 20 Americans lived in an urban area. Today, 14 out of every 20 Americans live in urban centers, core cities and suburbia. Put another way, 70 percent of our people are living on about one percent of our land. 30 percent live on 99 percent of the land. The urban areas, the small towns and the hinterland are in trouble. Urban congestion has become costly. So have the problems of the small towns, and the countryside. Little in the way of a definitive societal cost generated by these problems is available.

Orderly and intelligent development of the nonmetropolitan parts of this Nation are visualized as necessary to ease congestion and strife in the cities and add to the quality of living outside of the cities. Perhaps this is an oversimplification -- rural development is an activity whose time has more than come. Its purpose is to provide a greater freedom of choice to every person to choose where he will work and rear his family. A dream world? Not exactly. Rather it is a program designed to more effectively use space as an asset for a better and more personalized life.

Tomorrow's science in agriculture is not merely a matter of removing scarcity from the earth. People, communities, institutions, and organizations whether directly or indirectly involved in agriculture must be of a quality to enable this service to accomplish this end.

Technological developments whether for agriculture or for developmental purposes cannot be utilized effectively in a developmental and intellectual vacuum. For in the end, the effectiveness and utility of any technological development and the success of any industry, be it agricultural or non-agricultural, depends upon the quality of the decision-maker and the quality of the economic and social environment in which the utilization of the technology is proposed. Thus, science has the added responsibility of providing the kind of knowledge that will make possible the attainment of both objectives.

[1]Presented at the meeting of the Rural Sociological Society, Montreal, Canada, August 1974. Views expressed are solely those of the author and do not necessarily represent those of the Cooperative State Research Service or the U. S. Department of Agriculture.

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We need only witness the slow adoption of technological advances in underdeveloped countries or the large number of slow adopters in our own affluent culture to appreciate this. For these reasons and many others an activity such as rural development is even more urgent now than ever before.

Rural development goals

Historically, numerous attempts at enunciating rural development goals have been made. Any rational attempt at establishing goals is a delicate and complex undertaking at best. This is due in part to the fact that rural development like most social activity is everybody's business. It is something however that needs to be sorted out.

Dating back and subsequent to the passage of the Purnell Act of 1925, development efforts, however defined, were aimed principally at the agricultural population and particularly at agricultural production. During the 1930's, efforts to improve rural communities were undertaken by the Resettlement Administration and the Farm Security Administration. A substantial part of the effort was farm rather than total community oriented. Rural development as a viable activity remained relatively dormant during World War II. In the 1950's revitalized rural development program efforts emphasized self help. Involved Federal, State and local agencies and staff however were those with principal expertise in agricultural development. Even so, the notion of self help suggested a broader scope of activity with at least a tacit inclusion of the total community.

On many issues concerning rural development, widespread agreement on goals does not exist. On some, agreement does exist. For example, President Nixon has described as a goal the reversal of the longstanding trend of outmigration from rural to urban areas.[2] While some demographers have for three decades warned of the potential crises in the cities, only in the 1960's did the general public become aware of the problems of overcrowding as an aftermath of the riots in a number of cities. Up to that time many social scientists and others took the position that migration to the towns and cities of our land was the solution to rural problems.

Efforts called economic development, resource development, area development, regional development, industrial development, rural renewal, community development, human resource development, etc., are terms commonly bandied about. The names are relatively unimportant. Rather their importance lies in the reasons for their establishment. All suggest efforts, and perhaps they need to be viewed as interdependent efforts adding up to a total integrated or system effort toward helping people help themselves in rebuilding or reshaping their environment, i.e., the social economic and physical conditions and situations within which they live, learn, work and play.

[2]Rural Development Goals. First Annual Report of the Secretary of Agriculture to the Congress. January 1974. p. 1-2.

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Guidelines prepared jointly by State agricultural experiment stations directors and the CSRS staff (CSRS-OD-1266, April 3, 1970) defined rural development as a complex process leading to greater social and economic well being for people and their community. Quoting further from the guidelines, "It (rural development) implies potential -- social and economic. It is through the improved use of these resources that the development process can occur. This process must make more people better off -- not just improve incomes for a few. It, in reality, is a system with many interdependent parts, of which there are at least five major ones and an unlimited set of sub-parts." The rural development process thus is concerned with community development, human resource development, economic resource development, natural resource development, and with a more equitable distribution of these benefits among the different population groups. Essentially, these objectives are becoming the mainstays of rural development around which activities by whatever name tend to concentrate.

Community development includes all services communities are required to provide such as schools, and education, health facilities, welfare, fire and police protection, roads, and recreation facilities among others. It also has two extra important dimensions; (a) quality of living, and (b) spatial distribution.

Human resource development includes the people, their training and skills, their values, attitudes, and their goals for their families and for their communities.

Economic resource development includes the various forms of economic activity that increase jobs for people and that generate incomes for an ever increasing number of people.

Natural resource development includes improved utilization of natural resources including land, water, air, scenery, among others, whenever done as a specific input to a rural development program.

A more equitable distribution of benefits includes doing things because of the values of this Nation that lead us to help those who are unable to help themselves which includes delivering an equitable share of Federal program services to rural people, especially to rural disadvantaged.

Obviously, rural development is not highly specific. Rather it is encyclopedic. The end results of rural development research, for that matter all research -- of all constructive human effort in rural areas are not just better houses, or better roads, or hamburger stands, or factories, or improved skills. More important the ends are opportunities and services for people and they always must be for people.

Rural development dynamics

As of June 30, 1970 just over 300 Station projects were already in the mainstream of rural development at the 53 State agricultural experiment stations. About 1.6 million dollars in Hatch monies plus about 2.3 million of all other monies including that from State appropriations for a total of 3.9 million dollars was being spent for rural development. The

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1971 appropriations for research at the stations earmarked 3 million dollars for Community Improvement Research. This plus the amount already being spent for rural development or the base plus additional other monies for a total of nearly 11 million dollars resulted in the activation of 200 additional projects. With 3 million in Hatch monies made available again in 1972, the number of projects increased to 761 and total expenditures to nearly 12 million. In 1973, a total of 815 projects were recorded with a total expenditure of about 13 million. As of April 1, 1974, total projects were 786 with an expenditure of nearly 12.5 million. Over the same period total scientist man-years (SMY's) quadrupled from 73 to about 300 in 1973 and 253 for 1974.[3] It is too early to tell just how meaningful the leveling off and the slight decline may be in financial and manpower resources, or possibly what impact the anticipation of and the then initiation of the Title V program discussed below may have had on the growth of the Hatch supported program. Part of the explanation lies in the fact that some consolidation of projects took place thus reducing the total number. Higher cost of doing research also reduces manpower input.

Expansion of the Hatch supported rural development program has been occasioned by some reallocation of resources within a fairly constrained budget situation covering the past several years. Just how far the stations may be able to reallocate resources in the face of a changing multiplicity and complex of demands on research resources is difficult to estimate without much more study than is possible here.

The latest stimulus to rural development is legislation enacted two years ago. On August 20, 1972, President Nixon signed into law the Rural Development Act of 1972 (P.L. 92-419). The Act provides for financial and technical assistance, and under Title V for developmental research and extension services for a pilot period of three years for the enhancement of the quality of life and the improvement of incomes and job opportunities in rural America. The Act was only an authorization. Funds for implementation of Title V of the Act were appropriated for fiscal year 1974 in the amount of $1,500,000 for research and $1,500,000 for Extension.

The passage of this Act and particularly inclusion of Title V represents the first concrete legislative commitment to a joint research-extension effort toward solution of problems of rural development. The Act as a whole combines all the major components of rural development so that the education component, the research component, the credit and other financial assistance components, and the planning component are provided simultaneously through tested and proven administrative machinery already in place and operating in rural areas. The overriding purpose of the Act is to encourage and speed up growth in rural areas, to provide jobs and income required to support better community facilities and services, to improve the quality of rural life, and to do so on a self-earned, self sustaining basis.

[3]Above data obtained from Cooperative State Research Service records.

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Following appropriation of Title V funds, each of the States developed and submitted a State Annual Plan of Work to Washington for approval.

A number of program thrusts were delineated by the State Plans. In some cases a plan included more than one thrust. A preliminary compilation of the thrusts shows them in descending order of frequency. They are concerned with:

1. building and strengthening development processes, clarifying problems and alternatives in development, and with strengthening decision-making processes and leadership,
2. developing more jobs and increasing income,
3. strengthening the economic base of communities or areas and developing resource potentials,
4. improving specific services such as health, medical care, housing, rural transportation, education, fire protection, and solid waste management,
5. improving community services and facilities, i.e., in general,
6. land use, policy, controls and attitudes and decision-making,
7. building and strengthening local organization for development and with developing cooperation among development agencies,
8. improving job skills and manpower development,
9. water use and alternatives in water use, and with
10. public and private financing of development.

Quite clearly, the above thrusts have a strong process component as might be expected from a joint research-extension approach. A component of the State Plans not ordinarily found in research projects is a statement of a plan for evaluating the impact of each pilot program on the development of the pilot area. This includes evaluating the effectiveness of the extension and research program, program techniques, and organizational structure for planning and conducting each program. Included is the opportunity for community leaders to make appraisals in the pilot area as part of the evaluation. Thus, the users of the research-extension experience are represented in the evaluation process and do have opportunity to indicate judgment on the effectiveness of the program and the benefits deriving therefrom.

A review of the above thrusts and of the guidelines developed for administration of the Hatch funded rural development research projects suggests a strong complementarity between the two programs. This, of course, is as it should be.

The State agricultural experiment stations became aware that if significant rural development progress and coordination was to occur, a greater capability to deal within structural and systems frameworks needed to be developed. One such product of this awareness was the establishment of four regional rural development centers whose broad objectives were (1) to improve the understanding on the part of both scientists and the public of the complex interrelationships, social, economic, and technological which are involved in the process of development, and (2) to provide through research findings, the basis for

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intelligent decision-making in planning, implementing and evaluating public and private activities designed to raise the socio-economic well-being and improve the quality of life in rural areas. While the Centers have perceived their roles in somewhat different ways, they have made significant progress toward fulfilling the above objectives.

The addition of the regional aspects of the Title V program to the Centers' activities is resulting in greater comprehensiveness of responsibility on the part of the Centers for rural development. Too, it has resulted in greater participation on the part of Extension in the work of the Centers.

A third major input into rural development is resulting from the funding of research at the 1890 Land Grant Colleges and Universities through appropriations under Public Law 89-106. The current appropriation to these institutions is about 12 million dollars. About 40 percent of the projects are of the rural development type.

Rural development crises

Rural development as a program lacks strong reference group support. Non-farm rural U. S. is not organized. Being the unspecific subject that rural development is tends to result in split and splintered rural organizational support. Too, despite its urgency rural development is easy to deflate. If rural development is to succeed and at some kind of a critical mass level, there necessarily must be coherent support for it. There is reason to believe that some kind of development of rural U. S. is going to continue to occur simply because there are more people in this Nation and increasing numbers of people are looking for alternatives to urban and metropolitan living even though this means absorbing more rural acreage for residential and vacation purposes.

State and National governments and the Land Grant institutions unquestionably have the responsibility to see that growth or development in the rural areas is not inconsistent with the use of land, nor with community improvement and improvement in the quality of living of the rural population. The growing awareness of economic underdevelopment or decline, of community underachievement and lack of fulfillment in many areas are contributing to the growing interest for increasing amounts of societal investment in rural areas.

It has been asserted by many that Land-Grant Universities have had an important part in the rural undevelopment process. Beginning in the 1940's and continuing on into the 1960's, many economists, and other social scientists either urged or offered no viable alternative to people other than to leave the farm for nonfarm jobs thus accelerating rural-urban migration. It is not uncommon for social scientists to be criticized for not having evolved compensatory measures and opportunities for the displaced. Today a small number of researchers are being asked to provide the knowledge base that will chart the road to effective development as against the large number of forces still hastening undevelopment.

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Add to this the immediacy of attention given to the food crises, to the energy shortage, to inflation, to scarcity of many materials essential in development activities and one can readily see changes in priorities with respect to work and support of this program. In short, rural development can be and is popular when other urgent priorities are not readily apparent.

Natural resource development, environmental quality, conservation pollution abatement, and land use are still other areas of interest that challenge the delineation and concept of rural development. These all present problems of differentiation to the law makers, program administrators and scientists and educators alike. It likewise presents taxonomic problems to those concerned with the orderly identification, classification and analysis of projects in rural development.

The popular notion of rural development is that it is largely a local area or community type activity. At the same time it must be observed that some of the big tools of rural development rest in Washington. For example, the transportation rate structure affects preference for and location of industry. Federal appropriations and loaning policies with respect to housing, water and sewerage systems affect their number and location. The Federal highway program strongly influences building and location of roads and highways. Subsidies for various kinds of education and health programs and facilities are important determinants of their location and availability to rural residents.

While for purposes of this paper the foregoing have been identified as crises, some may identify them as issues. However called, they are, among many others, issues of contention in the successful carrying out of a rural development program.

Rural development recommendations

A discussion of recommendations obviously could be a paper in itself. Earlier we had mentioned the major concerns of rural development. Here it would seem appropriate to mention some approaches to carrying out the program.

Looking ahead, there is growing evidence that rural development to be effective must be more concerned with programs and/or with systems, the terms here have some interchangeability. A research-extension approach such as under Title V is one approach. This approach, for the most part is highly applied, though there is some opportunity for the development of theoretical constructs.

Most of the Hatch funded research is quite specific. None deals with general rural development. Here would be an opportunity for a limited number of social scientists to make an important contribution. A subject such as this would deal with the big picture, with the big tools, with the whole interlocking system. Such a study should not limit itself merely to the development of large theoretical constructs. Studies on dual regional systems, on the development process, quantitative social policy,

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adoption of rural development type practices and means for bringing about greater equality of opportunity between and among communities. It is well known that opportunities for communities are not equal. As a result, communities and opportunities available to them tend to become stratified.

One can raise the question as to whether the important problems are being identified, and if and when identified, are appropriate and critical masses of input being assigned to their solution.

One can hypothesize too that for a large number of projects insufficient attention is given to research product relevance or linkage to various client groups. Nor, it might be suggested is sufficient attention given to the measurement of potential benefit and/or disbenefit to various client groups by specified researches or programs of research. A simple way of carrying out this type of evaluation is to set up a matrix with identified client groups listed across the top and then with either projects or programs listed seriatim down the left side of the matrix. Filling of the cells in the matrix may be by use of a "+" corresponding to the client group wherein it is perceived that a project or program will redound in positive benefit. A "o" would indicate no benefit or disbenefit and a "-" would indicate a disbenefit. Summing the signs horizontally will indicate the relative significance of a project or program to one or more client groups. Summing the signs vertically will indicate how many programs or projects are of benefit, no benefit or disbenefit to a given client group. A further elaboration of this procedure would be to assign weights to the client groups and to the programs or projects.

Mention has been made of the need for looking at rural development from a system point of view. When approached in this manner it is often difficult to organize on an interdisciplinary basis. Experience has shown that the process of organizing collaborative efforts is time consuming. Administrators and researchers are reluctant to devote the time to this process. Much of today's research effort is vertically oriented, but the demand for horizontally oriented research information is great. A useful starting point for researchers in two or more disciplines is at the multidiscipline level and then as experience is gained move into the more integrated interdisciplinary approach.

In conclusion, what has been said is not new to many of you, nor is it exhaustive. Perhaps what has been discussed in the context of problems should more appropriately be viewed as opportunities. Of one thing we can be sure, rural development, or by whatever name it is called, we are confident is here with us for a long time to come.